

A Visa and Immigration Policy *for the* Brain-Circulation Era

Adjusting To What Happened in the World While
We Were Making Other Plans

By Victor C. Johnson, Senior Advisor for Public Policy

REPORT SUMMARY

Visa and immigration policy, taken together, determine who can knock on America's front door – and how we respond. In its latest report, NAFSA: Association of International Educators proposes recommendations for an integrated approach that reflects the opportunities and realities of today's world. Too often, report author Victor C. Johnson writes, outdated thinking has limited the policy debate, and policy actions, in these important areas. The report urges U.S. policymakers to move toward defining the country's security objectives more broadly than has been the case in much of the post-9/11 period, stressing that openness to the world is imperative for ensuring our country's long-term well-being and security. The report also notes that the United States has been slow to appreciate and adjust to a paradigm shift in global mobility that has fundamentally altered patterns of travel and work around the world. America can no longer assume that it is the preferred destination for people who seek to improve their lives outside their home countries. Talented students and skilled workers have many options around the world – they will go to the places that welcome them and offer the best opportunities. The United States' challenge is to participate in the global community in a way that lifts up Americans to compete in a global workforce while also being open, accessible, and attractive to the world's best talent and future leaders.

The report makes recommendations in the following key areas:

Visa Reform –Revising the policy on interviews for visa applicants; expediting reviews for low-risk travelers; reforming the security clearance process for visiting scientists

Comprehensive Immigration Reform – Reforming employment-based immigration; attracting international students; improving management of the Department of Homeland Security

Identity Documents and Document Security – Revisiting REAL ID

The Obama Administration has committed itself to constructive U.S. engagement in the world, to an economic recovery that enhances long-term economic competitiveness, and to robust student, scholar, and citizen exchanges. Congress and the administration must work together to ensure that the United States can be open, accessible, and attractive to the world's best students and talent.

About the Author: Victor C. Johnson is senior advisor for public policy at NAFSA. The author wishes to acknowledge the contributions of Rachel H. Banks, Heather M. Stewart, and Ursula Oaks in the preparation of this paper.

About NAFSA: With nearly 10,000 members, NAFSA: Association of International Educators is the world's largest nonprofit professional association dedicated to international education. Visit us online at www.nafsa.org and join the conversation at blog.nafsa.org.